

PS 1774
.H45 C6
1857
Copy 1

*Croner
Inquisition*

Handwritten text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is faint and difficult to decipher but appears to include the words "The" and "of" in a cursive script.

THE MINOR DRAMA.

No. CXVII.

A

CORONER'S INQUISITION.

A FARCE,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

A. OAKLEY HALL.

AS PERFORMED AT BURTON'S THEATRE.

NEW YORK:

SAMUEL FRENCH,

122 NASSAU-STREET, (UP STAIRS.)

1785

751774
 .H95C6
 1857

CAST OF CHARACTERS.—(A CORONER'S INQUISITION.)

Burton's Theatre.

| | |
|---|----------------|
| GREGORY GRIGGS—Innkeeper, and one of Her Majesty's Coroners for the County of Slopley | Mr. M. Smith. |
| SIR WILLIAM PLUMMER, BART. (<i>in disguise.</i>) | Mr. Rainford. |
| FRANK PLUMMER, M. D.—A village doctor, and his nephew | Mr. Holman. |
| CURRAN O'ROOLEY—A law clerk | Mr. Moore. |
| SIMON DOBBS—An ostler | Mr. Bishop. |
| BAILIFF | Mr. Lawson. |
| TREMbles | Mr. Gourley. |
| MILLICENT (<i>or Milly</i>) GRIGGS—Daughter of G. G. and affianced to Dr. P. | Miss Florence. |
| JENNY—Servant | Miss Charles. |
| NEIGHBORS, VILLAGERS, (male and female). | |

SCENE—First in Loudon, and then at the Village of Slopperton.

TIME—From sunrise to 10 o'clock.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

L. means *First Entrance, Left.* R. *First Entrance, Right.* S. E. L. *Second Entrance, Left.* S. E. R. *Second Entrance, Right.* U. E. L. *Upper Entrance, Left.* U. E. R. *Upper Entrance, Right.* C. *Centre.* L. C. *Left of Centre.* R. C. *Right of Centre.* T. E. L. *Third Entrance, Left.* T. E. R. *Third Entrance, Right.* C. D. *Centre Door.* D. R. *Door Right.* D. L. *Door Left.* U. D. L. *Upper Door, Left.* U. D. R. *Upper Door, Right.*

* * The reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

321013
 23

A

CORONER'S INQUISITION.

SCENE I.—Outer room in Railway Station in London. Time, just before daylight.

Enter GREGORY GRIGGS, attired for an early start. October morning—large shawl about neck, and portmanteau.

G. G., [*puffing.*] Aha! I am *not* late. I said to myself, Griggs, my boy, don't hurry. I did *not* hurry! [*Puffing.*] I never do hurry, and I *am* in time. Bah! There was plenty of it at the start. To tell me otherwise was only a dodge on the part of that rascally landlord to get me to ride, and put a half crown more into the pocket of some confederate. I'm an innkeeper myself these twenty years, and know all about the rascalities practised in London, and which we in the provinces *never* copy. I quarrelled with that landlord. I told him I would be in time, and I *am*. [*Yawns.*] It's very early. No passengers yet, and the clock of the station, as I came through, gives us a quarter. [*Yawns.*] I slept badly. In every noise I detected a new murder; and I'm sure I heard no less than three distinct creaks of garroters in the street under my window. And they say early morning is favorable to garroters. [*Looks terrified.*] It's the early jail-bird which catches the gentleman worm! "The Globe" says garroters are fearfully on the increase; and the "Court Journal" adds that the prevailing style of collars exhibits necks to advantage, and invites crime. Now, I've a beau - - u - - tiful neck somewhere under this wrapper. [*Feels shawl.*] Aha! They couldn't garrote me in this shape! If all they say is true, what a sweet place the coroner here must have. I wonder if he does his duty? I've been doing mine, in my mind's eye, ever since I had my certificate of appointment yesterday, countersigned by the thirty-second clerk to Her Gracious Majesty's eighteenth assistant to the principal deputy of the Circumlocution office of the Home Department. What a sweet corpse that same clerk would have made! Set on him! Why there was a breadth of form and a repose of official elegance about him to give room for a jury of twenty! That reminds me—I wonder if my commission is safe? [*Feels in his portmanteau.*] That's it—no, it's my hair-brush! Here—no, that's my horseshoe. for good luck! This—no, it's my patent bootjack. Now we—no, it's my

brandy-flask. [*Takes a pull*] That's the sort to keep even a coroner alive. "Never say die" when that is full! Here's the precious document. [*Produces a heavy roll of parchment.*] No passengers yet, and I'll amuse myself once more inspecting my credentials. What a breadth of authority! [*Reads.*] "To all (that is to every person in the world) to whom these presents—(Her Majesty's present! Beautiful and poetical idea!)—shall come, Greeting." (Her Majesty's greetings to me!) [*Interrupted by a noise behind, as if of some one crossing the stage. Looks around.*] This is too precious a document to be seen by everybody, and waste its fragrance on the morning air. [*Is rolling it up.*]

Enter CURRAN O'ROOLEY, R. equipped for travel. Sees G. G.

C. O'R. Rural! Twig his neck build!

G. G. [*Hearing last word, and alarmed.*] Neck build! Good heavens! it is a garroter! [*Prepares to move*]

C. O'R. [*Aside.*] Looks like a travelling agent for country factory. Large parchment with red seal. New patent, or diploma from the Exhibition. [*Aloud.*] Ahem!

G. G. *Turning fiercely.* Stand off there, you sir! I know you!

C. O'R. [*Advancing*] Pooh! Pooh! Don't be alarmed. You're a passenger, ain't you?

G. G. What's that to you? Stand off!

C. O'R. Why, I'm one too. So are you. Carpet-bag says so—neck build—all that. How far are we going day-day—eh?

G. G. Neck build! I did hear aright! He's a confidence man. But I'm alive.

C. O'R. I say, old fellow, what's the time?

G. G. Wants a grab at my watch! Look at the clock—that 'll tell you.

C. O'R. Independent cove, this! Wonder if he ain't a dead head?

G. G. Dead head! O Lord! I'm off! *Going. Clock strikes six.*

C. O'R. In time. Faith, you guess well. Only five more minutes. We'll have a light train. D'ye know where Slooperton station is?

G. G. I see a respectable man approaching, and I'll heard this fellow. I should think I did. I've been—— *Checks.* But he may be pumping me. I—I—yes, I've been there.

C. O'R. Oh! And how far might it be?

G. G. It might be as far as the Highlands or the Isle of Skye, where puppies come from——

C. O'R. Only it ain't. Ha, ha! Old fellow, you're a rum one.

Enter SIR WILLIAM PLUMMER, L.

G. G. Aside. Now I've an ally! Sir, do you know who you call a rum one? Are you aware? Can you understand? Do you appreciate who you address?

C. O'R. No; damme, and it's just what I'd like to find out!

G. G. Know then, sir, that I am one of her Majesty's——

Sir W., interrupting. My worthy friend, how far is the Slooperton station?

C. O'R. It's no use. Don't ask him. I've tried it. He's as mum and mysterious as the sphinx!

G. G. [*looking doggers at C. O'R.*] Sir! there is a vast difference between you and others. [*Walks away a step.*] It appears to me everybody is going to Slopperton. [*Takes Sir W.'s arm, and they retire up, whispering.*]

C. O'R. Rum chap! one of Her Majesty's something or another; perhaps a travelling detective. He looks stupid and loggy enough for one. That other chap is going to same place. [*Takes out a letter.*] Perhaps he'd take it. But no; the firm said I was to deliver it *in propria persona*. Wretched bore, too, just as the club gave its first supper. [*Reads*] For Frank Plummer, M.D. I'd give a sovereign to know what it's about!

They return.

Sir W. I think your fears are unfounded. He looks honest.

G. G. So they all do. But pump him.

[*C. O'R. drops letter, which Sir W. picks up and reads superscription.*]

Sir W. What for, Frank? Oho! this must be the law clerk, conveying to him the tidings. How lucky! We go together.

[*Returns letter.*]

C. O'R. Time's up. Oh! Thank you. Shouldn't like to have lost it. [*Reads aloud*] Now I'll not forget the name, if I should drop it.

[*Exeunt C. and Sir W.*]

G. G. [*going.*] Frank! eh? Both going to Slopperton? I see. I knew that young 'scape-grace of a surgeon was coming to no good. A sheriff's officer perhaps. I'll take another carriage from both of them, and watch.

Bell rings.

I hope there'll be no accident. I couldn't hold an inquest out of my 'bailey-wick.' It would be a dreadful thing to have a coroner smashed.—one of Her Majesty's coroners! and some other coroner hold a 'quest over him! Dreadful!

Bell rings and exit in a hurry.

SCENE II.—*Wood scene on a drop. Path. Enter Frank Plumer with two men carrying a heavy bag.*

Frank P. You're as slow as the new comet, my men. I worked too late on that subject and the people 'll be astir before he's under ground again.

[*They stop to breathe.*]

Come on. You know what a row this would make if it's known.

1st Man. Row indeed, master; but it aint hanging is it?

2nd Man. He's a heavy 'un to drag.

Frank P. Move on. Hanging! Oh no. Only a fine at best. I may as well owe the Magistrate as any one else. No damage to be feared. He was only a pauper, but his erysipelas in the head was a curious case. There! now you've rested, and if you meet any one deposit it in the copse by Gregory Griggs' turnstile until night-fall.

1st Man. All right, Bob.

2nd Man. We'll keep a brave lookout, you know.

Exeunt men.

Frank solus. Aye, pay the fine, and where's the money to come from. If it wasn't for love of science and love of dear Milly I should go crazy. Once my name is up in science and then welcome wealth greatness and love triumphant. What a dear, darling face she has. How it haunted my dreams. But the pauper's face is a queer one; I dissected all the nerves and arteries of his head. He wouldn't know himself. It would puzzle the town beadle to recognize him now. He had hair just like mine.

[Is going off—meets Millicent Griggs.]

Frank. Confusion! why Milly—you here?

Milly. And why not! Good morning to you, my darling Frank. I congratulate you on your early rising and your improving habits.

Frank. Can she suspect? But *you—you* are abroad early.

Milly. I promised dear papa to meet him at the station. He comes down by the first train, and now you'll go too. To tell you the truth I saw from the knoll two very ill-looking fellows carrying a bag. They had a very hangdog look.

Frank. To tell her would be to excite disgust, *[aside.]* Oh, merely some millers' men early astir. Of course I will go with you. But I can't meet your father.

Milly. The very time! He will be in a sweet humor for he's been to get sworn in as Coroner.

Frank. Ha, ha! A Coroner. Your father the Coroner! What a jewel of a son-in-law I should be at inquests cutting and carving, and pocketing post-mortem fees by the bushel!

Milly. That's right, *now* you're in a good humor. Come with me and we shall melt his heart yet. *[Exeunt R. to E.]*

[Re-enter men R. to E.]

1st man. The passengers from the train came up too quietly, Bob.

2nd Man. It's safe in the copse tho'. It's a bad job. If the doctor hadn't cured I of the agay, I wouldn't have touched the business. Hark! some one comes. *[They steal off, L. to E.]*

Enter Simon running—nearly knocks down Sir W. who enters at other side.
R. to E.

Sir W. Take care, my man.

Simon. Beg pardon, yer honor, I'se behind time. Mayhap you came by the train?

Sir W. Yes, my good lad, I walked on before the rest.

Simon. You saw Maister, mayhap, and Miss Milly.

Sir W. Havn't the honor of their acquaintance. How far is it to the Inn? Which Inn is the best? Here take my bag. There's half a crown. Can't you answer?

Simon. Why, you talk as fast as the locomoshun runs. Why I keeps the Inn, I means the Inn keeps I and master both. Maister

keeps the Inn, I means the Inn keeps I and master both. Maister Griggs, at your service.

Sir W. Griggs, [aside] why that was the name of the timid gentleman. *He* keeps an Inn. I thought by his talk he was a Member of Parliament. But I'll on.

Simon. I'll be along presently with the bag. Must see Maister first. Turn to the right at the hill :—sign of the Mule and Magpie. Thank yer honor. [*Pockets half-crown.*]

Exit R. 22.

Sir W., going. Mule and Magpie? Queer name that ; very like Frank's nonsense. I dare say he lives there, practising on drovers, graziers and dairy-maids. Queer mixture that boy was of waggery, industry and affection. I wonder how he'll take the news.

Exit. L. H.

Enter G. G., and MILLY G. R. 2.

G. G. I hope you'll behave as becomes my daughter. Let the parish surgeon alone. How dare he hang about you so? How dare he follow you to the Station?

Milly. B. Oh, father, don't be so very, *very* cross ; and you a coroner too, and all of us so proud of your promotion!

G. G., aside. There she comes : just as her mother afore her used to, with her soft soap. Ah-hum. I'm a little out of sorts. Travelling don't agree with me. Got up too early. Could not sleep forty winks, my dear : what with guarding the blessed commission which has one of Her Majesty's presents under my pillow, and hearing garroters shrieking all night—I mean their horrid victims?

Milly. Are you sure, dear father, it was not the cats?

G. G. B., with dignity. Cats! Ca-a-ts! There's a woman all over. Everything's cats. Plates broken,—cats; victuals gone,—CATS; new dresses torn,—cats. Cats, my love, are feline animals—not humans—like garroters. With all the responsibilities of my position as coroner, with Her Majesty's presents weighing me down, I repeat it was *not* cats, but garroters.

Milly, pulling him along. But then you know, father, cats are garroters! Ha, ha!

G. G. This levity is positively abominable. Do you know what it is to have your neck in jeopardy? Jeopardy! There's a coroner-ial word for you! *Exeunt a la Burton. L. to E.*

Enter CURRAN O'R and FRANK, holding a letter.

C. O'R. Curious, you should be the first man I met. Bedad whether the letter puts you in luck or not, I am ; for I shall take the noon train and your answer back to the club dinner.

Frank P. Take my answer back to the club dinner?

C. O'R. No bother. Its myself will go to the club dinner : but the answer will go to the respectable firm of Snoakem and Brokeam, solicitors, &c, &c., who will put you on file—I mean your answer—just as the cook trusses a goose.

Frank P. has been turning over the letter abstractedly.

Frank P., aside. Some dun, I suppose, on the old score : or perhaps a note from the publisher, refusing my valuable contribution to medical science on the subject of the diseases of the spleen in unborn infants. But here goes.

C. O'R. That's right ; dive into it like a man of pluck. [*Aside.*] I'm half dead to know what's it about, for old Smokeam is so mysterious. [*Frank is reading.*] And bedad I'm entitled, as a matter of post-boy etiquette, to know what's it about ; for every post-man,—from Sir James Graham down to the Hingham mistress—takes toll from every billet-doux in the kingdom.

Frank retires up agitated.

A frustration letter. I knew it from the size and envelope. Little note size is sauciness ; a trifle larger, slyness ; folio is importance ; quarto, frustration, and folio no. 8 is humbug given to diplomatic ink and lying goose quills.

Frank P., returning and giving hand. There—I see you are to receive my confidence. I will meet you at the Inn in a half hour—Mule and Magpie—first turn on the hill, where I will consult with you.

C. O'R. That's the figure ! [*Aside.*] A con-sul-tation, [what, about ; hanged if I know.] Sir, at your service. Keep quiet. Mum you know, Mule and Magpie, in half an hour !

Exit. L. to E.

Frank P. What does he mean ? Does he know all ? The letter says not. [*Takes it, and retires reading.*] He was a dear old man. What happiness ! *She*—dear—dear Milly will be mine

Re-enter Sir W. P. L. to E.

Sir W. P. The clown misled me, and has my luggage. [*Sees Frank.*] Ah ! it is he—reading the letter. He seems sad ! He is not cold hearted. Good morning, sir.

Frank P. Excuse me, sir, but I'm not in the mood for talking. [*Walking.*]

Sir W. He is not glad to hear of it. But—but I will postpone my talk to the Inn. [*Looks off.*] Ah ! yonder is the booby beckoning. This time I shall be right.

Enter SIMON.

Simon. Missed Maister by the little turn. Now, sir, follow me, and I'll put you there in a leg trot. [*Exeunt. R.*]

Frank P., muses and walks. This is a quiet village no longer. Some impertinent, prying stranger, just as my attention was arrested—

A Baliff has come in. R. to E.

Baliff. Just so—arrested—the very word, my boy. [*Pulls out writ.*] And I am the prying stranger. Who's a better right ? £29 7s. 3d. at suit of Druggem and Borax, chemists. Beg pardon, but you must go with me.

Frank P. Arrested! The Devil!

Bailiff. Arrested certainly—but *not* the devil. Bailiff Panks at your service. [*Presents card.*] “Cool apartments and light charges until the little things are arranged!”

Frank P. But the letter and the enclosure! Yesterday this would have been a blow. I will accompany you, sir, to the village and arrange it.

Bailiff. Now you talk sense! But when it's “prying stranger,” and “the devil,” you know that's scandal.

Frank P. Follow!

Bailiff. Follow? By the old Marshalsea but that's a good 'un. It's *you* who are to follow. [*Exeunt R. to E.*]

SCENE III.—*Sign of Male and Muggie. House at side—open country behind and a fence and gate to high road. Table set for breakfast. G. G. at breakfast with Milly, and Jenny waiting.*

G. G. Yes, Jenny, [*mouth full*], my good girl I shall retain you at your accustomed avocation. [*Aside.*] Avocation that's the very word; Her Majesty's presents speak of, and the very word, Her Majesty's 32d Deputy Clerk in the Circumlocution-office used. No, Jenny. I'm not proud if I am a Coroner. Do your duty!

Milly. More coffee, father.

G. G. Thank you, dear, I'm very peckish this morning and couldn't wait for the others. Do your duty, Jenny, as you've always done it since your dear mistress died, and you shall never want.

Jenny. [*Curtseying*]. Thank your worship!

[*Goes in house—L. to E.*]

G. G. Your worship! Worship! How nice it sounds. Its far sweeter than the chinks of Her Majesty's sovereigns on Bank day! Your Worship! I feel the first drunken moments of intoxicated greatness. I stand on an Egyptian pyramid of greatness. Milly, my dear—Miss Griggs, there are strangers to arrive. Pray go in and array yourself to receive them.

Milly. What airs have got into dear father's head? Oh! if Frank would but come whilst he's in high humor.

[*Exit into house—L.*]

G. G. I tread over catacombs of greatness. Your worship! Coroner! What's to prevent my being Sheriff next—and then a Baronet—perhaps a lord! Oh Lord! it makes me dizzy to think of it. What if luck should help me? What if some dark, horrid and mysterious tragedy should occur at my very threshold—some murder that should baffle the unbandaged eye of justice itself and I—Coroner Griggs—should ferret it out, my fortune would be made. And my daughter to lower herself to a parish surgeon—a work-house sawbones—a griller to grave-yards. Why, she shall marry a Duke, and the Lord Chancellor, on the wool-sack, shall join their hands.

[*Enter Simon Lobb in terror.—R. to E.*]

Simon. Oh! Master Gregory! Master Griggs! Oh dear! Oh dear.

G. G. What's the matter? Have you been garroted? and don't Gregory me, if you please, or the neighbors will hear you. Call me Squire, anything but Gregory. Don't you know I'm a Coroner! a Cor-o-ner, Simon!

Simon. Oh, but Maister! I'm out of my mind—it's so horrid.

G. G. Horrid, you fool. Speak! what do you mean. He *has* been garroted—his voice is reedy like a chimney swallow's, and his eyes swell. What's the matter?

Simon. [*Chattering*]. Murder's the matter!

G. G. [*Takes a chair*]. I knew it. I said so. I stand on—no, I mean, I sit on an Egyptian pyramid of greatness. Murder! Of course; and some horrid, dark, mysterious murder that no one knows of, neither the dead man nor the one who did it.

Simon. Yes, maister, and in a bag; and such a sight. I was with the strange gentleman and he sent me back for his umbrella to the station; and I thought I'd take a cross cut and I came across it, and it's in a bag, and the head's a jelly, and there's been murder and the strange gentleman's didn't meet me and—

G. G. Stop, stop. You're wasting a deposition. Run for a jury. I feel that I'm a Coroner every inch. Ring the church-bell; no stop. Alarm the village; no don't. See Farmer Dobbins. Get the Beadle. What a streak of luck! And them horrid strangers at the station. Dark murder of course! Tie up the bag. Put my seal on it. I put the seal of silence on the mouth of the bag. Run for a jury.

[*Exit Simon*—R. to E.

Enter C. O'R. R. to E.

C. O'R. "Run for a jury!" What an extraordinary idea! [*G. G. is striding up and down, muttering.*] I've heard of striking a jury, and of struck jurors; but—running for one! The fellow's mad. By all the blood of justices, it's my travelling friend, and one of Her Majesty's—something. I'll twig him. Hallo, fellow passenger!

G. G., turning. Stand off. I know you, sir.

C. O'R. So you said this morning.

G. G. And I say it again. London knows you, sir. Sloperton shall know you—Murderer! M-u-r-d-e-r-e-r!

C. O'R. Sir! oh, the fellow is certainly crazy. Mule and Magpie—this is the place to meet at. [*Looks up at sign.*]

G. G., comes toward him, and in a low voice. Bag—early train—suspicious character—murder—I must arrest you.

C. O'R. sits down and laughs.

G. G. Heartless wretch! This is the murderer, without doubt. It's wonderful how being a coroner quickens one's appreciation of character. It won't do, sir. You'd better not try your tricks on me.

C. O'R. This is comical. It's better than a MS. farce.

G. G. Heartless! Dark and mysterious assassin, the coroner will

have no farce about it. It will be a solemn matter in *his* hands. Some soul has just gone, sir, in a bag, a bloody bag! to that undiscovered country, from which no traveller as ever was born ever returns.

C. O'R. Well, and what's that to me? Is there a reward offered?

G. G. No need for it. The murderer of that soul is known.

C. O'R. So much the more reason for the reward. It's a safe thing to offer.

G. G. And you are he!

C. O'R. You don't mean to say that I'm suspected? Why, where's the *corpus delicti*. What's murdered? Who's murdered? You've got to find something first.

G. G. It is found. None of your mysterious trifling about *corpses delicti*. It's a coming, in a bag.

C. O'R. Bag—bag. Oh, I remember hearing two ill-looking fellows with one, as I—

G. G. Stop! On the authority of the coroner, I command you. No confession yet. They're premature. It's wrong. Don't commit yourself. *I'll* do the committing.

L. E. D. Enter MILLY, crying and sobbing, from house.

Milly. Oh, father, father—it is—it is. I've been down the lane I've heard all. This letter, picked up on the road. He's dead; he's murdered.

[*Faints in the arms of C. O'R., who has run to her.*]

C. O'R. What a charming adventure!

G. G. Stand off, murderer! Let not those gory hands embrace innocence! [*Takes her away.*]

C. O'R. What an adventure for a club dinner!

Noise of a crowd. Enter Simon with two men carrying a bag. *Jurors and villagers.*

1st Neighbor. A sorry sight this be, Master Griggs!

2d Neighbor. It lay in the turn-tilde copse by the road.

3d Neighbor. It be a fresh corpse and woefully mangled.

[*They gather around it, and Milly has revived and sits sobbing in a chair.*]

G. G. to C. O'R. Approach and behold your victim.

[*All start at him.*]

C. O'R. My victim! Behold him? Faith, I'd have to have the sight of a millstone gazer to see through that ugly canvas.

[*Stoops.*]

G. G. [*Aside.*] I'll make him touch the body and perhaps it will bleed. Put your hand on it.

C. O'R. With all my heart. It's a lumpish thing. Feels like a gutta-percha sea-serpent.

G. G. What shocking levity!

All. Shocking! [*in chorus.*]

C. O'R. Hold a bit. I'll cut the neck—

All. Cut the neck! Oh! Oh!

C. O'R. And let the cat out of the bag. I've let many a cat out before to-day.

[*All close around it.*]

Simon. Oh poor doctor.

Milly. Doctor! It is he then indeed! .

[*Faints.*]

[*Women close around her.*]

Simon. But don't take on so, Miss!

G. G. [*Aside.*] I may as well say it now he's dead. Yes friends he was to have been my son-in-law. But this is all irregular. I must get my jury. Now then stand and look once more and then to business.

1st Neighbor. The face is shockingly disfigured, but then it is his hair.

2d Neighbor. And his neck and the dint on it, too!

Simon. Stripped of all his clothes. Done in an hour's time, too. Oh, the brute!

C. O'R. I'll off, and enquire into this.

[*Goes up.*]

G. G. Seize him! Stand!

[*Two Bailiff's collar him.*]

C. O'R. But—but—

G. G. No "but" about it. You've murdered the Dr. and that's the long and short of it. Search him.

[*They produce an envelope directed to Frank Plummer, M. D.*]

G. G. Proof positive. [*Reads.*]

C. O'R. That's only the envelope. I must have mechanically pocketed it. [*Aside.*]

G. G. Only the envelope. Where's the inside?

C. O'R. He's got it. Took it away.

Simon. The lying wretch.

C. O'R. This is provoking. That isn't the Doctor. Humbug! it's an old corpse.

G. G. Silence! I'll commit you for contempt. Now then, you women take my daughter. Neighbor Dobbins hold on to the prisoner. Simon, bring pen and ink. I'll empanel a jury. Take seats there. [*He sits, and daughter is taken in while Simon returns with pen and ink.*] I'll show you what's law. Crowner's quest law. Drag the bag one side. Now we have it. Simons, Punker, Timpson, Briggs, Wilson, Dobbins, there's six of you; you'll be the jury.

C. O'R. Taint legal. Damme, if you're to suspect me you shall do it legally.

G. G. [*Writes.*] Put it down strong. Griggs, that's your sort. Swears "Damme," and says he suspects himself!

C. O'R. I'm a lawyer, too. Put that down.

G. G. [*Writes*] Says he's a lawyer too. His own lawyer. Has a fool for a client.

[*1st neighbor whispers to G. G.*]

G. G. Right. Quite right. Gentlemen, I will swear you. Hold up your hands. [*They hold up.*] You do solemnly swear in the presence of Gregory Griggs, just and true inquisition to make of all, every, singular and plural, whatever may be done or said touching this body in the bag of Dr. Frank Plummer and of this unfortunate murderer here as to how he was killed, and who it was, of his own peculiar malice aforethought inflicted, and did the homicidal stab; so help you Her Blessed Majesty.

All Jurors. We swear!

C. O'R. It's all wrong. That's no oath, damme. It's nonsensical.

G. G. Murderer! Don't swear. I'll do the swearing. The jury will swear. It's our duty! Who's the first witness?

Simon. I found the body.

G. G. True! and the bag. Now Simon you're a good young man. Do you know the value of an oath?

Simon. As my grandmother taught me, please sir, I do.

G. G. Then as your Grandmother taught you I charge you to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, with full particulars.

Simon. I swear. [*Hand up.*]

C. O'R. Where's your Bible? It aint legal. You've no Bible.

G. G. Murderer! be silent. We have three in the house. But they shall not be profaned by any such proceedings as these.

Jurors. [*Approvingly.*] Right Mr. Coroner, and we forbid interruptions.

G. G. You hear. The jury are sagacious. They forbid interruptions. Now Simon Lobb what is your name?

Simon. True for you there, Master, and that's it just.

G. G. Simon Lobb [*writes*] a just name, and he is thirty years old next Michaelmas.

Simon. And not an hour shorter!

G. G. [*Writing.*] Michaelmas and not an hour shorter; and Simon, I'll add "has been a good boy all his life."

Simon. Thank 'ee sir!

C. O'R. [*Aside.*] This is infamous. I protest. I shall lose the train. And he don't come. This is some plot. Oh, that cursed letter.

G. G. What does he say? Dobbins, watch the prisoner. He musn't confess. Now Simon, tell your story.

Simon. I'd a been to the station and missed you, and I saw a stranger—

G. G. This man?

Simon. Another!

G. G. Another stranger? There's two of 'em. This is a double mystery. Where?

Simon. In the copse road. He gave me his porty-manter and

said he would be up to the Inn. He asked for Dr. Frank and asked about him.

C. O'R. 'Tis he! I see. Maybe he is murdered. Stop! I'll tell you something.

G. G. Silence! Didn't I tell you there was no time for confessions yet. Go on, Simon.

Simon. He missed his way. I saw the doctor with a letter, and the stranger man way talking to him. But we comed away together. I mean I went back, and that's the last I seed of him until on the cross cut I saw the bag in the copse and—

G. G. Stop, I can't write so fast. This is important "bag in the copse" [*writes*]

Simon. And the Dr—oh, poor dear gentleman—in it.

G. G. Very satisfactory. There Simon, you came out finely that time. You're a model witness. Gentlemen, that is satisfactory!

A Voice. [*trembles*] But Squire are you sure it's the doctor?

G. G. Silence! Who's that disturber of the Court?

1st Neighbor. Please sir, it's Toodles.

G. G. Toodles! stand forth. Toodles, you're a drunken beast. What do you mean by disturbing the solemnity of these proceedings. Sure it's the Doctor! Who doubts it? Who dare say that the body in that bag is not the body of Dr. Frank Plummer, my son-in-law as was to be? Echo answers nobody; and I pause for a response! I shall put it down "Admitted to be the body of Dr. Plummer." [*So writes.*]

Enter Sir William P., aside, L. to R.

Sir W. How unfortunate I missed the road and my hand so hurt. But I was anxious to watch the dear boy.

Holds up hand and comes down.

G. G. [*Sees him.*] Aha! The other stranger. Who'd a thought it; and the respectable one—arrest him.

C. O'R. Blood and thunder that's the man—look at his hand.

They seize him.

Sir W. What does this mean? Take care my arm. I fell and cut it.

1st Neighbor. Fell and cut it!

They shake heads and murmur.

G. G. Gammon. Release the first one. Here's the murderer. The genuine one. He has the *corpse deliciti* in his hand. How it bleeds. This is the original, unadulterated murderer.

They seat him.

Sir W. Now, then! Who is this? What is this? What do you mean?

G. G. This is an inquisition, sir.

Sir W., smiling. I should think so. Do you have tortures?

C. O'R. Red hot ones! Pineers to the neck. [*Rubs his arm.*]

G. G. A GRAND inquisition. I am the coroner. [*With dignity.*]

Sir W. Indeed? And what's the matter?

C. O'R. How innocent! as if *you* didn't know.

Sir W. Who's dead?

G. G. Sir, my future son-in-law; a friend to science—a bright ornament to the profession, the best surgeon in the kingdom.

Sir W. What do I hear? Can it be Frank? Where?

C. O'R., oratorically. Here, sir. [*Points to bag.*] Behold all that remains of Frank Plummer, M.D., and who would have been F.R.S., [first rate son-in-law] had he lived. [*Whispers as Sir W. stoops to examine.*] Be cautious. I'll be your counsel. Don't commit yourself.

G. G. is writing, as all examine body.

G. G., writing. [*Aside.*] "Says he'll be Frank, and cut his arm a-doing it." What a horrid world we live in! Who'd a thought it? *By this, Sir W. has arisen from examining the body, and the crowd uncloze.*

To Sir W. There, my fine murderer: what do you think of the horrid work of your mysterious hand, yet gory with the innocent blood of that martyr to science? Why, he's pulled half the teeth of the parish in six months, and given all the work-house children the small pox in their arms. Alas that he is no more! He described horses, too, like a *veteran* surgeon.

Sir W. My worthy friend, I made your acquaintance this morning at the London station. You were afraid—half crazy—called this respectable gentleman, [*pointing to C. O'R.*] ——

C. O'R. Respectable gentleman, thankee!

Sir W. A garroter!

G. G. I was mistaken.—That's all. [*Warmly.*]

Sir W. And are now. That's no doctor—it's a poor, half-starved man—a cadaver.

C. O'R. A what?

G. G. Humbug and gibberish! None of your murderous lies to me. *I'm* coroner.

Neighbors. Aye, aye! Respect the law.

G. G., to C. O'R. Here, Mr. Lawyer, I swear you in as clerk. This grows interesting. Sit down.

C. O'R. sits down, and so does Sir W., smiling sarcastically.

Now write. Put down that the new prisoner—you're the old one, you know—says the body of Dr. Frank Plummer is a ——, a ——. What's the slanderer's word? You ought to be ashamed of yourself to slander the dead.

Sir W. A cadaver, you blundering fool.

G. G. Death and fury! But I must be mild. I am not a gentleman whilst I am coroner. [*Aside.*]

C. O'R. A key-dah-ver. [*Writes.*] All right.

G. G. Confesses it's a dah-ver, which is, I'll be sworn, Botany Bay for dagger.

C. O'R. whispers to G. G.

Right—my clerk says we are *super visium corporis*.

C. O'R. Which means, in sight of the body.

G. G. Silence. Don't I know? Yes, that we are in the sight of every body; and you ought to know what has been done so far by us.

Sir W. No occasion. I don't want to.

G. G. But you shall. The law says you shall, and you must! Now listen. [*With severity.*]

Sir W. Positively, this is amusing. [*Aside.*] Well, if I must, I will. Go on, my fine muddler.

G. G. to C. O'R. Put down—"fine muddler."

C. O'R. That's down—muddler. Bedad, that smacks of punches.

G. G. Now I'll read what has already been testified to. Here is the "Deposition of Simon Dobbs, Esq."

Sir W. R. As fine a deposition as ever was penned, I'll be bound, since the days of Dogberry!

C. O'R. Treason to the coroner! I'll prove it out of Burn's Justice.

G. G. What do you mean by your Dog—Berry. Was there a blood-hound in the case?

G. G. is putting signature, &c.

Sir W. Burn justice, you mean? Why, this is roasting it.

G. G. There, sir, you hear your guilt from this. [*Taps deposition.*]

Sir W. I hear nothing of the kind.

C. O'R., aside, to G. G. You can make certificate of that. Didn't he come in with his hand cut?

G. G., aloud. Of course. And ain't he the stranger? You were last in the Dr.'s company.

Simon. L. With a letter.

C. O'R. And money in it.

Sir W. Ha! you know, then? You pried into it?

G. G. Beautiful. Now they're both confessing. [*Takes pen.*] "Confesses they were together, and each had his letters and his money."

To Jury, who nod and murmur.

Gentlemen, It's as clear as sunlight. So I'll close the case, and charge you.

Sir W., rising. Let me understand this burlesque. The Doctor is missing, you say, and that cadaver, that old corpse there, is supposed to be him.

G. G. Old corpse! Supposed to be him? I tell you it is him. They've identified his very toe-nails. Men who have known him from his youth upwards, have sworn to him, thus cut off in the BLOOM—yes, bloom, sir—of his existence, and my future son-in-law.

Sir W. Your future son in law?

G. G. Was to be, had not your assassin's blow—

C. O'R. Capital! Bravo! What a dashing thought for an opening speech.

G. G. How dare you be so noisy in the very presence of death? Where was I, Dobbins?

Dobbins of the Jury. "Assassin's blow?"

G. G. Yes—*your* assassin's blow put a periodical to his existence!

Sir W. Ha, ha ha!

C. O'R. This levity is shocking.

G. G. Damnable!

A Voice. Hellish.

G. G. Who's that? I'll have him to know I'm able, as coroner, to do my own swearing.

A Juror. It's Trembles.

G. G. Turn Trembles out, and fine him £2 10s. [*Trembles hustled off.*]

Sir W. We'll settle it to your own satisfaction. Only give me my breakfast first, for which your nonsense has given me an appetite,—and then hang me afterwards.

G. G., *aside*, Although coroner, I am still an inn-keeper. Murderers are always rich. [*Aside.*] Yes—go in. He can have breakfast. But let two men guard him.

L. Exeunt two and Sir W. into house.

G. G. Now what's to be done?

C. O'R. Charge the Jury! Charge Gregory, charge—on Gregory, on, and so forth.

G. G. Certainly—you are correct. That's according to Hoyle and Gunter.

[*N. B.*—*This can best be done impromptu, a la Burton. But for instance:*]

Gentlemen of the Jury, This solemn finding of the body of Dr. Frank Plummer is an important epoch in the history of Slooperton, and I, as coroner thereof, so charge you. A dark and mysterious murder has been committed with malice aforethought, and—and—

C. O'R. At the instigation of the devil—

G. G. And at the instigation of the devil—thankee—[*as if to C. O'R.*] by cutting several of the carotid arteries about the face, and an indefinite number of the jugular veins of yonder breathless and inanimate, cold, clay corpse, which has gone to the undiscovered country, from which no traveller who ever was born ever gets borne back. That he was murdered is painfully evident. The murder has all the features of a homicide, although the corpse itself has got no features; and I charge you that you can so find. He was, undoubtedly, murdered whilst reading a letter with money in it, and then put into the bag in the corpse.

Juror. If you please to excuse the interruption, sir, could it be suicide?

C. O'R. No *felo de se* in the case, decidedly.

G. G. Of course not.—No fellow of the sea about it, and I'm surprised at the question—as if a corpse could cut itself to pieces in that way, and then put itself into a bag, and then into a corpse.—No, gentlemen. [*Getting excited.*] I charge you that this is as foul a murder as was ever committed, since the days when Cain killed Abel and fled into the land of Nod, and you may so find, by virtue of your oath.

Fortunately, one great mystery is cleared up.—We have a man—a bloody-fingered man—in our midst, or was in our midst until he went to breakfast, just now, who did the deed. He attempts to deny that this is Dr. Frank Plummer, and laughs at it. Gentlemen of the Jury, I charge you, on your oaths, that this is evidence of guilt.

Door opens and Milly enters with a scream of delight followed by Sir W.

Milly. 'Tis he. He's coming down the road. Oh father, father, 'tis he. [Jurors rise.]

G. G. My poor girl is mad!

Sir W. And if she was, it would be a case of inheritance from her father! The poor dear [*he is now holding her*] has made an impression upon me, and is the image of my once dear child!

C. O'R. [*Who has run to the road.*] By the great Lord Mansfield himself, 'tis he. Hurrah! Hurrah!

Enter Dr. Frank P.—Milly runs to embrace him.

C. O'R. Your son-in-law returned.

Dobbins to Juror. This be a great mistake.

G. G. This is a swindle—an outrage—a mistake—a plot—it is treason to the Coroner—stand off, corpse-like man.

[They are shaking hands with Dr. F. who is astonished.]

Dr. F. What! why what was all this? why this gathering?

Milly. It means that we are all happy!

Dr. F. Have they heard the news of my fortune then? [*to C. O'R.*] Have you told?

G. G. Happy? Miss M.! Miss Griggs—daughter of a Coroner—how dare you say we are happy when we are all miserable. [*To Dr. F.*] How dare you, sir, be here alive when it's proved you are dead, mangled, murdered, with all your jugulars cut and found in a copse?

Sir W. There; my mysterious friend, didn't I tell you it was a cadaver.

[Dr. F. has examined it.]

Dr. F. I must own up—this is a subject which I dissected and concealed. I had been arrested for debt on my way back from the station, but it is paid thanks, to the postal services of this gentleman here. [*To C. O'R.*]

C. O'R. The letter was all right, then!

G. G. What a melancholy lie. It's all a lie. This is a dreadful conspiracy.

Dr. F. Friends, I am rich, but at a great loss, my long lost and much loved uncle—

Sir W. Is not dead [*coming forward.*] But here to greet you. Pardon me the little ruse. I sent a letter in advance and came to see its effect. But the fortune you can share.

Dr. F. You, Sir William—my uncle!

Sir W. Returned from India to greet you! } *They embrace*

G. G. Frank, the nephew of a Baronet!—my dear son-in-law!

[Embraces him.]

C. O'R. How familiar we all are. My dear Sir William—My dear Doctor. If there are any family settlements remember

[Hands a card.]

G. G. Stop your impertinence. Hav'nt you got us all in a scrape with your ignorance of law?

Sir W. And this dear maid? [To Milly.]

G. G. I give my consent. So ends the inquisition. According to all crowner's law, if a body turns up alive in consequence of a jury sitting on it, the jury may be discharged without agreeing. [To audience.] But I hope this jury will not go without agreeing to attend our Coroner's Inquest until further notice.

THE END.

The Largest, Cheapest, and Best Magazine in the World !

T H E

New York Journal

OF

ROMANCE, LITERATURE AND ART.

BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED.

Having purchased the well known NEW YORK JOURNAL, the present proprietor will CONTINUE IT PERMANENTLY, and will hereafter issue it with such a liberal regard to its improvement in every branch of LITERATURE and ILLUSTRATION, as shall make it unsurpassed, in point of ATTRACTIVENESS and REAL VALUE, by any other Journal or Magazine. THE NEW YORK JOURNAL WILL APPEAR PUNCTUALLY!

In size, a large quarto, each number will contain sixty-four pages, three columns wide. Its contents will embrace subjects selected and arranged so as to give, in the most agreeable manner, authentic INFORMATION and AMUSEMENT to every one.

The Journal will have ONE NEW and INTERESTING NOVEL, continued from number to number, alone worth the price of subscription; besides numerous TALES, ROMANCES, STORIES and POETRY.

In the DRAMA, the proprietors present a most agreeable feature, which does not exist in any other Journal, viz. : that of publishing in its columns an ENTIRE ACTING PLAY. The plays will be carefully and judiciously selected, offering what may be made use of, with a little tact in adaptation, as a very Pleasing and Instructive PARLOR ENTERTAINMENT.

Improvements in AGRICULTURE, GARDENING, the Rearing of Domestic Poultry, etc., will be drawn from all reliable sources.

This Journal will aim at instructive "HINTS for HOME LIFE," addressed to the Ladies, on Health and Diet, Household Affairs, a Mother's Cares, Personal Accomplishments, etc. PATTERNS for useful NEEDLEWORK, and HINTS on the ART of DRESS will be accompanied by a description of a choice of the FASHIONS, with illustrations.

SPORTS of the SEASON, illustrated, suited to Children and Young People, in doors and out of doors; and such matters as have a happy influence on their health and intelligence.

Comicalities, Humorous Sayings, Anecdotes, and "Good Things," will lighten the more solid matter.

TERMS:—Published Monthly, Price, 18¢ cts. each number; \$1 per volume, or \$2 per year. PRICE TO CLUBS, four copies, \$7; six copies, \$10; 10 copies, \$16, invariably in advance.

S. FRENCH, PUBLISHER, 122 Nassau St,

* * * For sale at periodical depots, everywhere. (Up Stairs.)



1124.06456 1350

1124.06456 1350

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 018 597 396 7

